

## INTRODUCTION

What is the driving force behind your life? Rick Warren wrote a tremendous book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, which has sold over 30 million copies. He says our lives should be driven by the purpose of knowing God through Jesus Christ. I agree. That book is so popular, I'm thinking about writing my next book about marine biology and I'll name it *The Porpoise Driven Life*. Sorry—I know that's not very finny...I mean, funny. But it's no fluke. Sorry again. But unless you are following Jesus, every other purpose in your life is just a fishy excuse to live.

The book of Joshua is about following Jesus. He enables us to make the leap from good to great. The title of this series is borrowed from the excellent best-selling business book by Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*. In the first chapter Collins writes: "Good is the enemy of great. We don't have great schools, because we have good schools. We don't have great government principally because we have good government. Few people attain great lives, in part because it is just so easy to settle for a good life." (p.1)

My premise for this series is that many Christians are content for settle for a "good" Christian life. They are saved, but they never enter into the abundant, overcoming, victorious Christian life available to them. Dr. Alan Redpath understood there are two levels of Christian living. He wrote: "The crossing of the Jordan does not illustrate the passing of a soul into eternity, but rather it illustrates the passing of a Christian from one level of Christian living to another. It marks the end of the self-life and the beginning of the Christ-life. Between these two levels of the Christian life rolls the mighty Jordan River—a river of impossibility." (*Victorious Christian Living*, p. 51)

After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, a new generation of Israelites was given a second chance to enter into the Promised Land.

Joshua 3:1-6. "Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. After three days the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people, 'When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it.' Joshua told the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.' Joshua said to the priests, 'Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.' So they took it up and went ahead of them."

Joshua 3:14-17. "So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of

the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground."

The story of Joshua's leadership into the Promise Land is much more than just a historical account of military conquest. It is a powerful metaphor of how each of us can cross the Jordan River and enter into a new level of Christian living. It's making the leap from good to great.

Let's examine our salvation from two different perspectives.

## **I. SALVATION IS ILLUSTRATED IN FOLLOWING JOSHUA**

The name Joshua *Yashua* in Hebrew means "God's salvation." The Greek pronunciation of *Joshua* is "Jesus." Joshua had the same name as Jesus. It goes deeper than having the same name. Just as the Old Testament Joshua led the children of Israel into Canaan, our Jesus is the One who leads us into our Promised Land. Let's consider how the events in Joshua's life can be compared to three phases of the Christian life:

### **(1) Red Sea Stage: God brought you out of the land of bondage**

The children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. God brought them out through the miracle of the blood of the Passover Lamb. When they came to the Red Sea, they faced their first impossible barrier. But God parted the waters and the Children of Israel passed through on dry land. Then, as the armies of Pharaoh pursued them, they were destroyed when the water resumed its place.

1 Corinthians 10 teaches that the Red Sea stage is a picture of our baptism into Christ. Once you have accepted Jesus by faith, you will want to be baptized into Christ. From that point on, you become a Child of God, and you can know you are going to heaven when you die. It's not because of anything YOU have done, but because of the miracle of salvation God has brought about in your life. But if you think that is all there is the Christian Life, you've missed the whole point! There is more, so much more!

### **(2) The Wilderness Stage: Don't live on the borderline!**

Once they were out of Egypt, God led the children of Israel to the wilderness for a prescribed time. He led them to Sinai where they received the Ten Commandments. Then He led them to Kadesh Barnea, the gateway to the Promised Land. It was at Kadesh Barnea, that the people turned away from God.

For the next forty years, Israel wandered in the wilderness in disobedience. Oh, they were still the Children of God, but by living on the borderline, they missed out on God's best! They settled for good when God wanted them to experience GREAT.

Today, my heart breaks for all the Christians who have grown content to live in the wilderness—right on the borderline of blessing. Living in the wilderness, or staying on the borderline is a life of boring routine. But when you cross over into Canaan, you discover the thrill and excitement of Christian living; your spiritual life changes from a mundane ritual to an exciting adventure. It

says in Joshua 3:4 "you have never been this way before." Canaan is a place of vital spiritual variety and the wilderness is the place of boring spiritual monotony.

Do you know what the Israelites ate for 40 years? Manna. God supernaturally fed them with little white wafers that appeared on the ground every morning. When they first saw it they called it *manhu*, which means "What is it?" Based on the description in the Bible, the closest food we have to it today is Corn Flakes. Corn Flakes are okay, but can you imagine eating corn flakes every meal—for 40 years? That's what they had in the wilderness: Manna in the morning; manna in the evening; manna at suppertime. It got so bad they longed for the food they ate back in Egypt. In Numbers 11:4-6 the people of Israel were whining, "If we only had meat to eat! We remember the fist we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna." A cucumber is twelve inches of indigestion, and a melon is 95% water—and leeks, onions, and garlic...yuck! Many of them wanted to return to Egypt, where they had been slaves. When you are living in the wilderness, you find yourself longing for the life you had before you were a Christian.

Major Ian Thomas was a British military hero. He became a great teacher of the Word of God. In his classic book, *The Saving Life of Christ*, he describes a wilderness Christian: "The Wilderness is a picture of what the New Testament describes as a carnal Christian. If you are a carnal Christian, like the Israelites, it means that you neither enjoy the leeks and garlic of Egypt nor the golden corn of Canaan—you are dumped in the desert!" "Are you bored? Have the things of God become monotonous? Are you more tempted to grumble than to rejoice? Are you suffering from leanness of soul? Maybe you got out but you never got in! You still belong to the Church in the Wilderness!" (*The Saving Life of Christ*, p. 37, 75)

### **(3) Jordan River Stage: God brings you into the land of blessing**

There is more to the Christian life than just having your sins forgiven and going to heaven when you die. Jesus said, "I've come that they may have LIFE, and have it to the full." (John 10:10b)

But sadly, multitudes of Christians come right to the borderline, and then they turn around and wander in the spiritual wilderness for the rest of their lives. Ruth Paxson wrote a poem about the generation that come to Canaan and turned their backs on the Promised Land. It should serve as a warning to each of us:

*They came to the gates of Canaan  
But they never entered in.  
They came to the very threshold  
But they perished in their sin.  
And so, we are ever coming;  
To the place where the two ways part;  
One leads to the land of promise;  
And one to a hardened heart.*

You may be thinking, "Okay, pastor, you've convinced me there is more. How do I enter in?" The next part of this message is all about how to cross over into the land of Promise.

## II. SALVATION IS EXPERIENCED IN FOLLOWING JESUS

The Children of Israel followed their Joshua into Canaan. If you want to follow our Joshua, Jesus, into spiritual Canaan, there are three things to know and three things to do.

### (2) Jesus is our Ark of God's presence—keep your eyes on Him!

Joshua 3:3, 11. "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God...you are to move out from your positions and follow it...See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you."

The Ark of the Covenant is mentioned 15 times in Joshua 3. It was a gold plated box that represented the power of the presence of God Almighty. God wasn't restricted to a box, but His presence was represented by it. The box contained the tablets with the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod that had sprouted, a copy of God's Laws, and container of manna that never spoiled. Later, the Ark was moved into the Holy of Holies in the Temple. It was covered with a lid on which two cherubim were facing each other. The lid of the ark was called "the mercy seat" and it was where the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of a spotless lamb once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

The Ark has disappeared from the face of the earth, (contrary to the movie, "Raiders of the Lost Ark"). We don't need the Ark anymore, because Jesus came and fulfilled the purpose of the Ark. He is the "container" of the presence and power of God. We read in Colossians: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, [Jesus] and through him to reconcile to himself all things...by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (Colossians 1:19-20)

God told the Israelites to keep their eyes on the Ark and follow it. But they were warned not to get too close to it. They had to maintain a separation of about a thousand yards. In the same way, we're to always keep our eyes on Jesus. But as much as we love Him, we must remember we cannot violate His absolute Holiness. He is Lord and Savior, but He can never just be our "old buddy, old pal." We must always offer Him the distance of reverence.

If you have figured it out yet, salvation is Jesus. The Ark is Jesus. Canaan is just *more* of Jesus. My friend, Ron Dunn, spent most of his ministry teaching this truth of moving into fullness. He taught here on several occasions, and now he's at rest in heaven. Here's how Ron described Canaan: "The Victorious Christian Life is not an experience or a formula or a certain way of behaving—it is a Person. That person is Jesus Christ; He is the victorious Christian life. Triumphant living isn't getting things from Christ; it is realizing we already have all things in Christ. The abundant life is the life of Jesus residing, reigning, and released in the believer." (*Victory*, p. 43)

Moving into Canaan isn't getting more of Jesus. It's Jesus getting more of *you*. When you came to Christ you received all the spiritual resources you'll ever need. Canaan is simply claiming those blessings that are available. When we brought our daughters home from the hospital, they couldn't walk. When they got ready to walk, we didn't go back to the hospital and say, "Okay,

we're ready for the legs now." No, at birth they received all the equipment they needed to walk—they just had to grow into the place where they utilized the equipment they already had.

That's what Canaan is. You may be wondering if I'm talking about a second blessing. Yes, but the second blessing is fully realizing what you got in your first blessing!

### **(2) Jesus is our guide into a new adventure—step out in faith!**

Joshua 3:6, 15-16. "Joshua said to the priests, 'Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.' So they took it up and went ahead of them...as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing."

The wilderness is a place of boring routine. But for those who follow Jesus into spiritual Canaan, every day is an adventure. For the Israelites, it started with a white water adventure. I've been to the Jordan River dozens of times, and it is usually calm and peaceful. But during the harvest season, it can become a raging torrent. The word "Jordan" itself means "descent." The water in the Jordan starts on the slopes of snowcapped Mt. Hermon in Northern Israel. In the space of about 90 miles, water descends 10,000 feet through the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth at 1,300 feet below sea level. When Joshua and the children of Israel faced the Jordan, it was at flood stage. There was no way to go over it, or around it. God said to "Go through it." It sounds like an absurd command. I imagine some of the Israelites thought, "Right! There's no way I'm doing that!" They didn't offer many swimming lessons in the desert.

Sometimes we react the same way when we hear some of God's commands. For instance, God says when things are going tough for us, we should sing praises to Him. That doesn't make sense. It's like when Jesus told Peter to step out of the boat and walk toward Him on the water. That would suspend the very law of gravity. But Peter stepped out in faith—and we need to do that same thing.

In commenting on this crossing, the great Christian writer, A.W. Tozer observed: "As the priests stepped into the waters, the river piled up in a heap. They would have stood there all day waiting if they had not stepped out by faith and put their feet into the Jordan. God waited on them for 39 years in their unbelief before they were willing to cross over with Him. How many times do we come to new experiences with God and He patiently waits for us to step out by faith? And waits, and waits, and waits. He waits for us to get our feet wet. We have no way of knowing HOW God will provide or deliver us and when we step out by faith He does it."

Go ahead. Step into the water by faith. Obey what God tells you to do. He will give you the power to obey when you choose to obey. That lead us to the final truth about Jesus:

### **(3) Jesus is our pathway through problems—celebrate your crossing!**

Joshua 3:17; 5:10-12. "The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry land...On the evening of the fourteenth day of

the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites."

When I was in college I often changed the words to secular songs to a Christian message. For instance, I sang Simon and Garfunkle's "Bridge Over Troubled Waters." But I'd change the words to say, "When you're weary; feeling small; when tears are in your eyes, He will dry them all. He's on your side; Oh, when times get rough; and pain is all around like a bridge over troubled waters, He carry you."

I don't sing that song anymore, because I've learned Jesus isn't a bridge over troubled waters—He is the pathway *through* troubled waters. He doesn't keep us above the roaring river of adversity; instead, He takes right through the middle of it. But that's where you find Canaan—on the other side of the raging river of trouble. And when you get to the other side, you will have a reason to celebrate your crossing.

There was nothing to celebrate in the wilderness. But when the Israelites entered Canaan, they celebrated the Passover for the first time in 38 years. That's the first time in 40 years we've found the word "celebrate" in their vocabulary. My heart literally breaks for the Christians who live in the wilderness, because they seldom rejoice. To them, religion is something to be endured rather than a relationship to be enjoyed. You can recognize wilderness nomads by their lack of joy. They have perfected what I call "the Baptist holy look." It's a cross between acid indigestion and a migraine headache." But in Canaan, there is joy unspeakable full of glory! In John 15:11 Jesus said, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

To quote another spiritual giant, F. B. Meyer wrote this about our Canaan: "The Land of Canaan is Christ. He is our Land of Promise. Those mountains are the mountains of His strength. Those valleys are His humility. Those springs are His joy. Those rivers are His Holy Spirit. Those treasures are His Wealth. That land—look at it! It is all yours! It is Christ in you and you in Christ—that is Paradise. (*The Christ Life for Your Life*, p. 57)

The Red Sea represents the death of sin in your life. It is God bringing you OUT. But the Jordan represents the death of SELF in your life. Only when you die to your own ambitions and plans can you experience Canaan's fullness. When you live in Canaan, Galatians 2:20 will be your daily motto. Canaan is dying to live: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

There's one other way to recognize your arrival in Canaan. On the day they entered Canaan, God stopped the manna. They started eating of the food of Canaan. Are you in a spiritual condition where you have to be spoon-fed the Word of God? Is your only nourishment the manna I place at your feet Sunday after Sunday? Or the manna you get in your Sunday Morning Bible Study Class? Come on, grow up. It's time to start feeding yourself on the Word of God! When you consistently pick up your Bible and feed yourself on God's Word, it's a good sign you've made

the leap from good to great!

## **CONCLUSION**

Many of you are right where the children of Israel were in Joshua 3. You are on the borderline, but God wants to lead you into the land of blessing. I don't know if I ever watched a full episode of the TV sitcom, "The Jeffersons," but I can recall their theme song: "Well, we're movin' on up—to the East Side—to a deluxe apartment in the sky. Movin' on up—to the East Side—we finally got a piece of the pie!" (Words by Jeff Barry)

That's what the Children of Israel could have sung that day: "Well, we're movin' on in—to the Best Side—to God's deluxe blessings in the land; movin' on in—to the Best Side—we finally got on track for God's plan."

My friend, I want you to know there is a level of Christian Living that is available to every Child of God. It's the Land of Claiming God's promises. You can call it the Higher Life, the Deeper Life, the Wider Life, or the Fuller Life. You can call it the Spirit Filled Life, the Victorious Christian Life, or the Abundant Christian Life. You can call it Sanctification, Purification, or Liberation. It's like making the leap from good to great. But it doesn't matter what you call it. It is there for you to claim. And it is God's Will for every Christian to cross over the Jordan River and experience it!

## OUTLINE

### I. SALVATION IS ILLUSTRATED IN FOLLOWING JOSHUA

- (1) Red Sea Stage: God brought you out of the land of bondage (Egypt)
- (2) The Wilderness Stage: Don't live on the borderline!
- (3) Jordan River Stage: God brings you into the land of blessing (Canaan)

### II. SALVATION IS EXPERIENCED IN FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus is the:

- (1) Ark of God's presence—keep your eyes on Him!
- (2) Guide into a new adventure—step out in faith!
- (3) Pathway through problems—celebrate your crossing!



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes